



The Methodist Church

United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

March 17th 2021

Dear Friends,

Like me, you will be feeling distress, pain and anger at the callous murder of Sarah Everard. Whatever the circumstances, her killing is tragic, and even though we know that such things are incredibly rare, the apparent randomness of it leaves us all, in different ways, feeling vulnerable and perhaps afraid. How we respond to such an awful thing is confusing. We retreat, or we become vocal and galvanised, or perhaps both at different times. It is possible to believe that in the current lockdown it was not sensible to allow a mass gathering to take place to remember Sarah and to collectively protest at the circumstances surrounding her death. At the same time, it is possible to believe that such a gathering was inevitable, necessary perhaps, and that the police's response to it was over the top and heavy handed.

We are never totally helpless of course; we can pray for her family and loved ones, perhaps even for her killer. We can enter into the debate which has resulted about violence against women and engage in some deep soul searching. We can hope that in some way, something good, some long needed change will come about because of what her murder has revealed about the way society has failed to take violence against women seriously for far too long. If we are still on the journey of needing to say, "Black Lives Matter" then we can also embark on the journey which says, "Womens Lives Matter." Yes, mens lives matter. All lives matter. But right now, in this moment, the message needs to be "Womens Lives Matter." And it is my hope and prayer that we will see changes – changes in legislation, changes in attitudes, changes in behaviour. I hope and pray that in time, Sarah's family will be able to look upon what has happened and see that their daughter did not die totally in vain. Yet what an unimaginably and despicably high cost for them to pay.

As a human race we have perhaps not been great at learning from our mistakes. Of looking at cataclysmic events in the past and in the present and acting to make sure these things do not happen again. Yet the Christian message is one of relentless hope. When Jesus speaks of 'wars and rumours of wars' (Mark 13: 7) he is not saying that the world will end, rather that we must sit up and take notice of things and do something about them.

How can we, like Nicodemus, be open to the Spirit which blows through us like the wind and is the source of our inner rebirth and transformation (John 3:4-8)? The capacity to live better and more kindly, and to love more fully is within our grasp. Our Circuit Lent Course has reminded us that the Bible is full of encounters which urge us to look into the faces of those who are on the margins of society and allow ourselves to be challenged to change – stories of wealth and poverty, of how we use our resources wisely and for the greater good, stories of those whose identity or status renders them invisible and cast aside.

We are in a season of change. Both in terms of the time of year – Spring is definitely here – but also in terms of society, nationally and globally. In many European countries daffodils still grow

wild and their blooming is celebrated with festivals – traditionally daffodils symbolise rebirth and new beginnings, I would also say they are symbols of hope and joy. Daffodils are a reminder of the beauty of creation, and can evoke a somewhat romantic or mawkish sentiment, but they can also remind us of the capacity of humanity and creation itself to renew, to change, to tenaciously hang onto life and regenerate; yes, sometimes they grow wild, but sometimes we need to take responsibility for planting the bulbs ourselves in order to enjoy their beauty.



And please remember as always:

In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of God's spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another.

- 1. When we feel lonely let us know that in Christ we are never alone.**
- 2. When we feel isolated may we be reminded that within the worldwide Body of Christ we are always connected.**
- 3. When we need a hug help us to feel the warmth of God's embrace**
- 4. When we are compelled to keep our distance, may we be drawn close to each other within the Spirit of Companionship that flows from God and which moves through and between each one of us.**

With love and blessings as we move through this season of Lent towards the cross and the ultimate resurrection hope.

Rev Cathy

NOTICES

Worship

See your local church notices for details but for the time being we are continuing our Circuit wide Zoom service at 3pm on Sundays. Login details as usual as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881 Password: 974333

Lent

Circuit Lenten Study Course 'Life Changing Stories: Scripture From the Margins'

Every Wednesday in Lent 7pm -8pm on Zoom, starting Wednesday 24th February led by the ministers.

The Lent Course will use the same Zoom Link as for Sunday Worship.

Forty Days of Faith

During Lent, we want to share what our faith means to us with one another through social media. Look out for #FortyDaysOfFaith on our social media feeds.

All WE CAN are also running an online Lent Course 'Change Begins in Lent' running at 8pm every Wednesday in Lent. To register please go to <https://www.allwecan.org.uk/event/lentgroup/>

Traidcraft

Live Fair for Lent Monday 22nd March at 6.45pm on zoom.

There's a further opportunity to attend this presentation by Matt Oliver, who works for Traidcraft, highlighting all sorts of ideas, products, producer stories, and facts about Fair Trade. It will emphasise the fact that Lent isn't all about giving things up, but can be an opportunity to learn and try out new things — and that when people ask you whether Fair Trade makes a difference, you'll have some answers.

If you would like to join please contact Jill Mckenna from Marple URC for the link jillyian@ntlworld.com

Holy Week and Easter

Some churches will be re-opening for prayer on Good Friday and worship from Easter Sunday (see your local church notices) but there will also be a variety of Circuit wide Zoom events during Holy Week, leading up to Easter Sunday.

Meditations for Holy Week 7pm-7.30pm

Monday 29th March, Tuesday 30th March, Wednesday 31st March, Good Friday 2nd April, Saturday 3rd April
A half hour of reflection, prayer, music and guided meditation led by Revds Cathy Bird and Katie Smith

Maundy Thursday 1st April 7pm

Share together in an Agape meal as we recall the events of the Last Supper.

The Agape is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry. The service expresses the joy of sharing, belonging and fellowship enjoyed within the body of Christ. If you wish to take part in the service you are invited to have with you a cake, or bread to eat and something to drink. If you wish, you can bake a special Agape Cake! You might like to make Agape Cup Cakes, or a large cake which can be sliced, and leave some on the doorstep of someone who will be taking part in the service but who may not be able to bake. Here is the recipe.

A traditional Love Feast Cake Recipe Adapted from the Middlesmoor Lovefeast Bread used in the Yorkshire Dales at the time of John Wesley

- 1lb (400g) plain flour
- 1oz (25g) baking powder
- 5oz (125g) butter
- 8oz (200g) sugar
- 2oz (50g) mixed peel
- 4oz (100g) sultanas
- 2 eggs
- About half a pint (280ml) of milk

Mix the flour and baking powder together, rub in the butter, then add the sugar, sultanas and peel. Beat the eggs together with a little milk and add to the dry ingredients. Add the rest of the milk to make a soft consistency. Pour the mixture into two loaf tins or a large cake tin. Cook at 180°C (350°F) or gas mark 4 for at least 45 minutes for the loaf tins, or 1 hour for the large cake tin.

Children's Easter Service: LET'S CELEBRATE EASTER! From Darkness to Life Sat 3rd April 10:30-11:00am
Eventbrite link for tickets - https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/childrens-easter-saturday-service-tickets-140263376535?utm_campaign=post_publish&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eventbrite&utm_content=hortLinkNewEmail

Easter Sunday

Zoom Worship 3pm with special guest preacher Adrian Plass

All the above Holy Week and Easter events (except Children's service) will use the same Zoom Link as for Sunday Worship.

Other Notices

From the Eco Task Group

It's Earth Hour on Saturday 27th March www.earthhour.org

We are being asked to switch off our lights for one hour 20.30 - 21.30pm.

Plenty of information on the above website link.

Circuit Prayer

As we continue into lockdown, let's continue to say this prayer together when we can, at 11am on a Sunday morning. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way with all those who are not yet able to come back to church. You can also read more about each church on the Circuit Website www.stockportcircuit.org.uk

God of Love and Life, we pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to (*pausing briefly to reflect after each name*):

Christ Church Methodist /URC , Dialstone Lane Methodist Church , Davenport Methodist Church , Edgeley Community Church , Hazel Grove Methodist Church, Heaton Mersey Methodist , Heaton Moor United Church, Jubilee Methodist Church, (Marple Bridge), Marple Methodist Church, The Ridge Methodist Church, (Marple), Romiley Methodist Church, St. Johns Methodist Church, (Cheadle Heath), Tiviot Dale Methodist Church (centre of Stockport), Trinity Methodist Church, (Bramhall Lane) , Windlehurst Methodist Church (High Lane) , Woodley Methodist Church

We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, though the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen